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THE PROVINCE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The conception of a social mind set forth in detail by Lazarus and Steinthal in the first issue of the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie* forty-four years ago, and the conception of society as an organism elaborated in the same year by Herbert Spencer in his essay on *The Social Organism,* have given rise to much discussion as to whether there is a social mind or a social organism in any other than a figurative sense. Some of this discussion has been fantastic and futile, and there is at present apparently a general tendency to agree that the social organism is nothing more than a useful analogy, and that there is no social mind and no social psychology apart from individual mind and individual psychology. At the same time, the development of psychology and sociology during the past twenty years has made it plain that the individual mind cannot be understood apart from the social environment, and that a society cannot be understood apart from the operation of individual mind; and there has grown up, or there is growing up, a social psychology whose study is the individual mental processes in so far as they are conditioned by society, and the social processes in so far as they are conditioned by states of consciousness. From this standpoint social psychology may make either the individual or society the object of attention at a given moment. Ethnology, history, and the phenomena of collective life in general are its subject-matter when they are viewed from the psychological standpoint — the standpoint of attention, interest, habit, cognition, emotion, will, etc. — and the individual becomes its subject-matter when we examine the effect on his consciousness of conditions of consciousness as found in other individuals or in society at large. Otherwise stated, the province of social psychology is the examination of the interaction of individual consciousness and society, and the effect of the interaction on individual consciousness on the one hand and on society on the

[1] An address delivered at the International Congress of Arts and Science, Department of Sociology, September, 1904.

other. If, instead of claiming for social psychology a separate class of phenomena, we accept this view, and regard it as an extension of individual psychology to the phenomena of collective life, we have immediately a set of important problems not included in the programs of other sciences.

Prominent among the problems which must engage the attention of the social psychologist is the genesis of states of consciousness in the social group and their modifying influence on the habits of the group. In group- as in individual life the object of an elaborate structural organization is the control of the environment, and this is secured through the medium of attention. Through attention certain habits are set up answering to the needs of individual and group-life. When the habit is running smoothly, or as long as it is adequate, the attention is relaxed; but when new conditions and emergencies arise, the attention and the emotions are called into play, the old habit is broken up, and a new one is formed which provides for the disturbing condition. In the reaccommodation there is a modification and an enlargement of consciousness. Since it is through crisis or shock that the attention is aroused and explores the situation with a view to reconstructing modes of activity, the crisis has an important relation to the development of the individual or of society.

A study of society on the psychological side involves, therefore, an examination of the crises or incidents in group-life which interrupt the flow of habit and give rise to changed conditions of consciousness and practice. Prominent among the crises of this nature are famine, pestilence, defeat in battle, floods, and drought, and in general sudden and catastrophic occurrences which are new or not adequately provided against; and in the process of gaining control again after the disturbance are seen invention, co-operation, sympathy, association in larger numbers and on a different basis, resort to special individuals who have or claim to have special power in emergencies either as leaders or as medicine men. Another set of incidents, regularly recurrent and anticipated indeed, but of a nature calling for recurrent attention, are birth, puberty, and death. The custom, ceremonial, and myth growing up about these incidents in group-life, and the degree to which

special functionaries have become associated with them, indicate that they have had a powerful influence on the attentive processes and the mental life of the group. Shadows, dreams, swooning, intoxication, and epilepsy represent another class of phenomena arresting the attention and causing reflection and readjustment, together with the development of ideas of causation and of a special class of functionaries who act as interpreters of the phenomena. Still another set of crises arises in connection with the conflict of interest between individuals, and between the individual and group-habits. Theft, assault, magical practice, and any and all invasion of the rights of others are the occasion of the formulation of legal and moral practice, and of the emergence of a class of persons specially skilled in administering the practice.

The mediation of crises of this nature leads, on the one hand, to the development of morality, religion, custom, myth, invention, art, and, on the other hand, to medicine man, priest, lawgiver, judge, physician, artist, philosopher, teacher, and investigator. It leads also to the formation of special classes and castes, to the concentration of knowledge, wealth, power, and technique in the hands of particular classes and persons, and to the use of special opportunity on the part of the few to manipulate and exploit the many. Viewed merely as incidents, both the crises and the practices growing up about them are a part of the history of institutions, but when viewed from the standpoint of attention and habit, they are subject-matter of social psychology.

It is in relation also to crisis, or the disturbance of habit, that invention, imitation, and suggestion — factors of the greatest importance in social evolution — may be studied to the best advantage. The crisis discloses the inadequacy of the habit, the invention is the mental side of the readjustment, imitation is the mode of reaction to the new condition or copy provided through invention, and suggestion is the means by which the copies are disseminated. Language is so rich a mine for the social psychologist, and so important in the study of suggestion and imitation, because it is not only a register of the consciousness of the race, but is, more than any other medium, the means by which suggestion is operative, and by which the race-copies are handed

on from generation to generation. For this reason all culture and all the history of culture may be said to be implicit in language.

Another incident of profound importance to the state of consciousness of the group is the emergence of a great personality. The man of genius is a biological freak, whose appearance cannot be anticipated or predetermined. All that we can say is that a certain number of individuals characterized by unusual artistic or inventive faculty, great courage, will, and capacity for organization, or unusual suggestibility in respect to religious and philosophical questions, do occasionally appear in every group, and that they powerfully influence the life-direction and the consciousness of their groups. Moses, Mohammed, Confucius, Christ, Aristotle, Peter the Great, Newton, Darwin, Shakespeare, have left ineffaceable impressions on the national life, and on the mental states of individuals as well. The fact that a school of thinkers at the present day grows up about a philosopher, or that a religious teacher may gather about him a group of fanatically faithful adherents, is a repetition of a principle of imitation which, apparently, has been in force since the beginning of associated life, and which in the history of all groups has tended to direct the thought and activity of the multitude into fixed channels. On the principle of Columbus' egg, one leads off and the others follow. The central Australian oknirabata is as influential in his smaller group as Aristotle in a larger, until the advent of the white man breaks up his influence. The Chinese are today carrying out principles of conduct inculcated by Confucius and Mencius, no crisis of sufficient importance having intervened to break up the old habits and establish new ones. The manner in which copies for belief and practice are set by the medicine man, the priest, the political leader, the thinker, the agitator, the artist, and, in general, by the uncommon personality, as well as the more spontaneous manifestations of suggestion and hypnotism in public opinion and mob action, are to be studied from the standpoint both of individual and of group-consciousness.

Still another incident of importance to the consciousness of a group is contact with outsiders. The Japanese are a most instructive example of the effect of foreign copies on a people sufficiently

advanced in its own thought to make intelligent use of them. From time immemorial the Arabs have penetrated Africa in connection with trade and slavery, and if it could be written, the history of their influence on the native population would be most interesting. Similarly the contact of black and white in America is a subject not at all worked out from the mental standpoint, and the American occupation of the Philippines is a condition which may be watched with equal interest. It is apparent already that a very low state of society is not prepared to accept bodily the standpoint and practice of a very high; the shock is too great, and the lower race cannot adjust. An important question in this connection is the rate at which a lower race may receive suggestion from a higher without being disorganized. Apparently the negro in America has not been able to adjust himself to white standards, while in Africa he has improved in contact with Arab influence. The Filipinos, on the other hand, are apparently able to reaccommodate after contact with the whites, and change their mental habits, but it remains an interesting question whether the Japanese are not more fit than we to put them in the way of advancement.

The psychology of social organization, taken from the standpoint of origin, is one of the most important questions with which the social psychologist has to do, and is also best approached from the standpoint of crisis. The advantage and necessity of living together in large numbers are apparent. But association in large numbers calls for inhibitions and habits not demanded in the individualistic state; and through the stress and strain of readjustment and the formation of habits suitable to social life steps are taken in the development of consciousness as well as of institutions. The maternal system of control, and the steps by which filiation through descent as a basis of association gives way to association based on common activities and interests and the occupation of a common territory; the psychology of the blood-feud, its weakness as an agent of control, the steps in its breakdown, and the substitution of control based on law; blood-brotherhood and tribal marks as signs of community of interest; totemism as an agent of control; initiatory ceremonies as an attempt to educate the young in the traditions of the tribe; tabu

and fetichism as police agencies; secret societies and their influence in bringing about solidarity; property and its influence on association and habit; popular assemblies among the natural races and their influence in promoting association; offense and punishment, particularly the consideration of why an act is offensive and the process by which a punishment is selected to fit the offense—these are materials furnishing a concrete approach to a psychological study of association. In the play of attention about these practices we are able to trace steps in the development of the consciousness of the race.

Ethnology and the kindred sciences have already established the fact that human nature, the external world, and the fundamental needs of life are everywhere much alike, and that there is, roughly speaking, a parallelism of development in all groups, or a tendency in every group which advances at all to take the same steps as those taken by other groups. Such phenomena as spirit-belief and accompanying ecclesiastical institutions, blood-vengeance preceding juridical institutions, a maternal system preceding patriarchal control, ecclesiastical and political despotism preceding democracy, and artistic, inventive, and mythical products of the same general ground-pattern, show a general law of uniformity in progress; and it is one of the tasks of social psychology to work out from the standpoint of habit, attention, and stimulation what conditions have contributed to make differences in the progress of different groups; whether steps in progress, if taken at all, are invariably taken in the same order by all groups; and why stimulation or opportunity is so lacking in some groups that old habits are not broken up at all, and the groups remain in consequence non-progressive. The study of parallelism in development not only throws light on social development, but the fact of a common possession of language, myth, religion, number, time, and space conceptions, political and legal organization, under conditions where the possibility of borrowing is precluded, indicates that the same general type of mind is a possession of all races, both low and high, and has an important bearing on educational theory and the race questions.

Another extension of individual psychology to the region of

social phenomena lies in the comparison of the states of consciousness of different races, classes, and social epochs, with a view to determining what mental differences exist, and to what extent they are due to biological as over against social causes. This involves, of course, a comparative study of mental traits.

The study of memory, sense-perceptions, and power of attention among different races and classes will assist in determining the degree to which differences of this character are innate, on the one hand, or due to the habitual direction of the attention and consequent practice, on the other. The study of mental traits must always be made with reference to the condition of activities prevailing, and the study is consequently both sociological and psychological.

The degree to which the power of abstraction is developed in different groups is another fruitful line of interest. The prevailing opinion is that the lower races are weak in the power of abstraction, and certainly their languages are poor in abstract terms. But a people whose activities are simple cannot have a complex mental life. Abstraction is much used in a group only when deliberative as over against perceptual activities engage the attention, and where the manipulation of complex activities involves numerous steps between the stimulus and the response, and a distinction between the general and the particular. The life of the savage and of the lower classes is of an immediate kind, with little mental play between the stimulation and the act, and consequently little occasion to employ abstraction. All races do possess language, however, which involves the use of abstraction; all have systems of number, time, and space; many of them have a rich repertory of proverbs; and all show logical power. The question which social psychology has to work out is to what degree apparent lack of power of abstraction is due to lack of activities and stimulations which force the attention to employ abstract processes and give it practice in handling series. Deficiency in logical power among groups in lower stages of culture is also obviously largely dependent on the fact that the general body of knowledge and tradition, on which logical discussion depends, is deficient. So far as this view holds, it means that what have

sometimes been regarded as biological differences separating social groups are not really so, and that characteristic expressions of mind are dependent on social environment.

The degree to which the power of inhibition is developed in the lower races as compared with the higher leads again to the employment of psychological methods and ethnological materials. The control of the individual over himself and of society over him depends largely on this faculty, and it is often alleged by psychologists and students of society that the inferior position of the lower races is due in part to feeble powers of inhibition, and consequent lack of ability to sacrifice an immediate satisfaction for a greater future one. An examination of the facts, however, shows that the savage exercises definite and powerful restraints over his impulses, but that these restraints do not correspond to our own. In connection with tabu, totemism, fetich, and ceremonial among the lower races, in the hunger voluntarily submitted to in the presence of food, as well as stoicism under physical hardships and torture, we have inhibitions quite as striking as any exhibited in modern society or in history. The occasions of inhibition depend on the point of view, the traditions, the peculiar life-conditions of the society. In the lower races the conditions do not correspond with our own, but it is doubtful whether the civilized make more use of inhibition in the manipulation of society than the savage, or whether the white race possesses superior power in this respect. The point, at any rate, is to determine the effect in a given group of inhibition on activities, and the reaction of the social life on the inhibitive processes of the individual.

The influence of temperament among different races in determining the directions of attention and interest is also an important social-psychological field. There is much reason to think that temperament, as determining what classes of stimulations are effective, is quite as important as brain-capacity in fixing the characteristic lines of development followed by a group, and that there is more unlikeness on the tempermental than on the mental side between both individuals and races. From this standpoint the social psychologist studies the moods and organic appetites of

the lower races — the attitude toward pain and pleasure, vanity, fear, anger, ornamentation, endurance, curiosity, apathy, sexual appetence, etc. It is not impossible, for example, that the arrested development of the negro at the period of puberty is due to the obsession of the mind by sexual feeling at this time, rather than to the closing of the sutures of the cranium.

Similar to the question of temperament in the individuals of a group is that of the degree to which the affective processes, as compared with the cognitive, are the medium of the stimulations promoting social change. Cognition is of less importance than emotion in some activities, notably those connected with art and reproduction, and it is even true that emotion and cognition are in certain conditions incompatible. In this general region lie such questions as the effect of rhythm on social life, particularly in bringing about co-operation in hunting, war, and work; the psychology of work and play; the bearing on social activity of ornament, dancing, painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and intoxicants; and to what extent an organic attitude of sensitiveness to the opinion of others (an attitude of mind essential to the control of the individual by society) had its origin in courtship and to what extent in the food-activities.

A comparison of the educational systems of the lower and higher stages of culture will assist the social psychologist in determining to what extent the consciousness of a group and the group-peculiarities on the mental side are organic, and to what extent they are bound up with the nature of the knowledge and tradition transmitted from one generation to another. There cannot be a high state of mind in a society where the state of knowledge is low, and if a group has not accumulated a body of scientific knowledge, through specialized attention and specialized occupation, it cannot pass knowledge on. And doubtless the low mental condition of some groups is not due to lack of native intelligence, but to lack of the proper copies for imitation. The Chinese, for example, are a race of great mental power, but they have no logic, no mathematics to speak of, no science, no history in the scientific sense, no knowledge worth the name — only precedent, and rule, and precept. It is therefore unthinkable that the

Chinese individual should be well educated or intelligent in the western sense, however assiduously he attends his school, since there is no organized body of knowledge of which he can get possession. At the same time, the member of this society may be able to master any knowledge in the possession of any group, if given access to it. In a study of this character we have therefore an opportunity to distinguish between the mental state of the individual and the state of knowledge in the group. Neither the eastern question, nor the negro question, nor questions of crime and social reform, nor of pedagogy, can be safely approached unless we make this distinction between the mind of the individual and the state of culture in his group.

Perhaps the most urgent of all demands on social psychology at the present moment comes from psychology and pedagogy, and is for a more definite and scientific statement on the question of epochs in social development, and the relation between stages of development in the consciousness of the individual and epochs of culture. There is an anthropological theory that there have been more or less clearly marked stages of social development, characterized by equally marked activities, and mental conditions corresponding with the types of activity prevalent in the different epochs. Psychology assumes further that there is a parallelism between the mental growth of the child and these culture-epochs —that the child passes in a recapitulatory way through phases corresponding with the epochs in race-development. Pedagogy is actually operating on the assumption of such a parallelism. It may well be, however, that the whole assumption is a misapprehension. There is another view that the brain like the body of man was made up in the earliest times on a successful principle, and that it has not changed materially since, showing merely a capacity to manage new problems as they have arisen in the outside world, using motor, perceptual, and co-ordinative processes more in the earlier, and abstract processes more in the later, stages of development. If this view is correct, the brain of the child recapitulates the brain of the race only in the sense that the accumulated knowledge and standpoint of the race are so presented to him, and with such urgency and system that habits are

broken up and reformed rapidly, and the mind transformed, in no biological sense, but only in the sense that the attention and the content of the mind are made correspondent with the world as it is at present. Social psychology must co-operate with psychology and anthropology in determining the principles underlying mental growth in the race and in the individual before the science of education can make any sure progress.

The view of the province of social psychology here presented has at least the merit of suggesting a field of operations not occupied by other sciences. It is not claimed that the materials used are entirely new, nor that the problems arising here may not arise in connection with other sciences also. But, after all, there is but one reality, and a new science never represented anything more than a new direction of the attention. The legitimacy of viewing the same materials from different standpoints can hardly be questioned when we consider that the human brain is studied by psychology, anthropology, physiology, anatomy, pathology, and embryology, and that experience has shown this differentiation of attention in the study of the brain to be precisely the method yielding the best results. It is, indeed, the scientific procedure corresponding with the division of labor in the industrial pursuits and in the professions; and the differentiation of a social psychology from the sciences of psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, folk-lore, and history, with a class of specialists giving their attention to the extension of psychology to the region of social phenomena, will yield, we may hope, results supplementary to those secured by these sciences, and of importance to the study of life and society.

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